







THE STORIES

OF

MY FOUR FRIENDS

BY

'VS

(ANDREWS) - 1

EDITED BY

MARGARET ANDREWS ALLEN

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THE CHILDREN
WHO LOVE JANE ANDREWS



INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THESE stories were partially prepared for publication by my sister Jane, and since her death were given to me among her other papers. I have collected and arranged them, following out as far as possible her original plan and using the title she had already chosen.

MARGARET ANDREWS ALLEN.



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OCEAN'S CHILDREN

OLD Mother Ocean moaned and called,
"Where are my children all?"

And from far and near the wide world o'er
They answered their mother's call.

I am a drop of pearly dew

Decking the flowers at night;

But a sudden sunbeam changes me

To a flashing diamond bright.

I am a shower of summer rain.

And within my drops I hold

An arching rainbow glorious

With sapphire, ruby, and gold.

And we are the snow and the icy hail;

By a law that the North Wind knows

He calls us to march in crystal ranks

Whenever his trumpet blows,

I am a spring like a mossy cup
Where the wild deer come to drink;
And I mirror the sky and feed the flowers
That blossom upon my brink.

And I am a rivulet leaping down
From my home on the green hillside
In a bright cascade with a shower of spray
Like a veil for a fairy bride.

And I am a river broad and strong;
A highway to the sea
I make for men, and they love me well,
For I serve them faithfully.

And we all are Ocean's children.
'T was the sun that lured us away.

We may wander far; she may wait us long.

But we'll surely come home some day.



MY FOUR FRIENDS





The first is a child. Her eyes are like violets and her hair is soft and light. A little pink dress flutters about her as she runs over the fields to meet me, with her

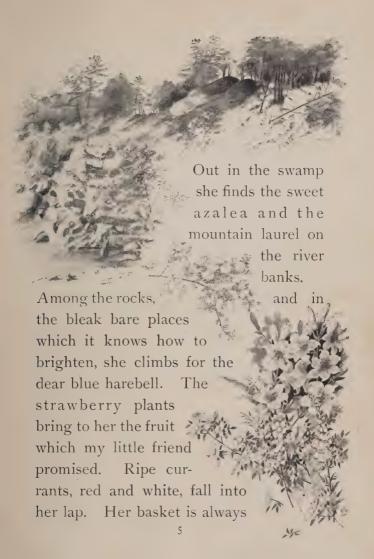
hands full of delicate young flowers,—the houstonia and violet, and graceful bellwort, the white-starred bloodroot and dogtooth violet, and the tender anemones—the wind flowers. She is almost one herself. She makes tiny garlands and scatters them everywhere, on the poor brown hills as well as in the rich meadow grass. Down by the brook and out in the pine woods she finds the earliest mayflowers and pushes away the dead leaves, that their

fragrance may perfume the whole forest. She has a way of whispering the est things to her friends. Her little voice it is that wakes up the crocuses and hyacinths, and makes wonderful promises of flowers and fruit to the young buds and

the frail strawberry blossoms that know nothing of the great world in which they find themselves.

To me, too, her whispers are very sweet. When I am busy and tired she comes, lays head on my shoulder, looks at me with the violet eyes that are full of sunny smiles or tender tears at each call for sympathy. Then, as if a sudden witching freak had seized her, she will shake the soft curls across her face and dance away, leaving my quiet little room in a whirlwind of confusion. This is my violaeyed friend, my bonnie baby, loved a loving. She comes only once a year to see me; but I can let her go, for her visits are very sure, and I wait to see what change another twelve months may make in my darling, and what new stories she will whisper into my ear.

My next friend is older, taller, and handsomer, yet not more beautiful. Do you know what I mean by handsomer but not more beautiful? Her hair is rich and golden, as if the sun had ripened it into gorgeous beauty. Her voice, too, is rich in murmuring sounds, and when she speaks or sings, I think I hear the hum of bees and the falling waters of the fountain, and sometimes the whole chorus song of the June birds. She loves the roses and brings them to me, both arms full heaped against her bosom, the wild roses and sweetbrier. prairie and pale blush, and even the oldfashioned cabbage and dark velvet roses that used to grow in the garden of our old house in New England when I was a child. The lilies, too, the tall white lilies that stand so fair in the moonlight, she loves.



heaped with raspberries and blackberries, and her sprays of wild roses are tangled among loaded whortleberry bushes. Long, happy stories she tells me in that melodious voice of hers, and I sing them dreamily over to myself in the long, sunny mornings under the trees.

Here is my third friend. Do you know any very beautiful woman whose face is more lovely to you than any picture, from whom one look is as good to you as many kind words from another? If you do, you may try to imagine what my third friend is like. Her hair is dark and her eyes are hazel and full of such light, that when she smiles you know it is from the bottom of her heart, and is a great warm light that shines through her whole life. She comes to me after the summer heats are over, when we can sit on the river bank even in the noon sunshine and be



about us is the sound of the grasshopper and the sunny song of the locust.

She scatters the falling leaves upon the water and they float down like fairy boats, crimson and yellow and brown, and we waten them far out of sight down the stream. We go together to the harvest field. We gather the grapes and the peaches and pears, and see the farmers fill the long rows of apple barrels that stand in the orchard. At last, when all the fruit is gathered, when the dead, fallen leaves are whirled about by the cold autumn winds and we only have the chickadee among the naked trees, she gives me one great, sweet smile from the depth of her hazel eyes, and that is her good-by.

My last friend is an old man, very old, with white hair and beard. Yet his eyes are bright and there is a young soul looking

out through them, for he does heartily enjoy

seeing the
children out
sliding and snowballing,
and is never better
pleased than when the

girls and boys buckle on their skates and skim away over the ponds. He can tell long stories, this old man, and I love to hear them. Sometimes he will come in on a cold winter night, when the snow is driving against the windows, and the wood fire crackling upon the hearth, and the babies are asleep in their cradles, and I am listening to the storm. Without ringing or knocking he walks quietly in, his white beard fringed with icicles, for he never minds the hardest weather. I put his staff in the corner, give him the great armchair by the fire, and then the stories begin. "When I was young," he says, "and that was more than six thousand years ago" — But I must not tell you now what he says. These winter evenings are never too long for me, when my old friend is with me.

We walk together sometimes, through

the snow or over the crystallized crust,
through the naked
forests and over
whole fields of ice. He
gives me

beautiful
gifts besides telling me stories.
Once he offered
me a rare set of
diamonds, but
they were too
precious to keep,

and I returned them to him when he was about to leave me.

These are my four friends, and I propose to tell you some of their stories,—not all, for they have visited me every year since I can remember, and they seldom tell the same story twice. But I will tell you a few here and there, as I can recall them, that you may learn to know and love my four friends as I do.

WHAT WAS HEARD UNDER THE GROUND ONE APRIL DAY



WHAT WAS HEARD

UNDER THE GROUND ONE APRIL DAY

Two days of April have passed, and on the third, as I open my windows to let in the spring sunshine and warmth, I see my little friend coming down the yard under the lilac trees, holding carefully some little handfuls of — what, I cannot tell. But in a minute more the blue hepaticas are in my lap,

and houstonias white as the snow that must have been lying about them when she found them.

"And here too, dear aunty," she says, opening her apron pocket, "see what I have brought—best of all, a wiry little striped snake that had crept out among the stones to sun himself. I sung to him, and while he listened, picked him up to bring home to you.

"Everything is so busy out on the hill to-day," she said. "I laid my ear down to the earth and heard such talking. Where the snow still lay about the crevices of the rocks, and the brown oak leaves were all wet with its melting, this blue hepatica had dared to open; and in another sunny spot on the hilltop, this whole cluster; but the others are afraid it is n't yet time. Their little roots are full of sap, and it flows and swells and tries to push them

forward; but one whispers to another, 'I think it must be very



cold out there; from my corner of the world I can see nothing but

snow; not even a bit of blue sky.'
'It was just so last year, my
grandmother says,' cried a
second, 'and she bade me
push up bravely, and I
should soon see that
there is sunshine enough
to live upon all day long.
The willow catkins too,

that hung themselves out long ago, are throwing off their brown cloaks, which they never would do if they expected another snowstorm. The willow is old and experienced; he has stood down there by the brook for ten long years, and may be expected to know about these things. And did n't we all hear the robins calling us this morning? And the violet, who is so buried in moss that she might bloom all the week before the sun would find her, says that she opened her eyes

for one moment, at sunrise, and saw a bluebird. So it is clear to me that it is time for us all to push our way into the world, open our eyes, and look about us."

Then the sap rose in the heroic veins of the brave little plant and even tinged her cheeks with pink, as she pushed aside her gray wrappings and looked out into the great world from the sunny side of the hill.

Warm and sweet had been her winter sleep; but how much more delicious this waking! How blue the sky, and with what a laugh the brook leaps along in the valley! He has been out of his icy bed for many a day already, and has worked his waters clear and free from the drifting leaves and sticks that the

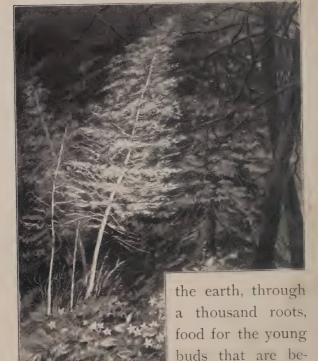


saying so and singing it over to himself, and everybody else who chooses to hear.

Then there are the snakes. Nobody. knew how many snug houses they had in crevices of the rocks, nor how they lay in bright coils hidden away there all winter. But to-day the warm sunshine has tempted them out; they slide over the stones, lift their forked tongues, and rejoice in the springtime as fully as do the flowers.

All this the daring hepatica sees and feels, and she sends down a thrill through her roots to tell the others how good it is and how sweet is life in the air above. And under the hemlocks, among the moss, the mayflowers have dreamed that one might now safely push open the green cloak and dare to look up at the sky; and their perfume is wafted through the dark old forest, a sweet messenger to tell the wood anemone and the violet that spring has come.

All this while the birch tree stands white in the sunshine, drawing up from



ginning to grow in good earnest. And the sugar maples, in the farmer's great

sugar orchard, have already given sap enough for pounds upon pounds of sugar, and are now busy with the rest, swelling their green folded buds that are to be spread out into a lovely summer dress, and give shade and shelter to robins' nests and blackbirds and thrushes.

The knotty old oaks are pushing off their last year's clothes, that would cling and stay through all the winter, but must now make room for the downy, pinktinged, gray leaves that have so much work to do before another spring.

And, if we had the fine ears to listen and to hear under the earth, 4 we should become aware of the busy murmur all day long as the roots gather

food for every plant; strength for the stems and tree trunks, fiber and soft tissues for the leaves, and delicate color and fragrance for the blossoms.

From the dark earth all is gathered; gathered by the roots which reach like little hands for what they need, and up into the sunlight and air all is carried. For without the blessing of the sunshine the sap would work in vain; it could make neither strong stem,

green leaf, nor fair flowers, but only poor, pale plants,

feeble and sickly.

Does the spring waken you, dear children, as it does the flowers, and make you leap and grow in the sunshine?

TWO WEDDINGS ON ONE SUMMER MORNING



TWO WEDDINGS ON ONE SUMMER MORNING THE spring had been cold and stormy. The birds who were trying to go to housekeeping had a very hard time. From my chamber window I could see them sitting drenched and forlorn under the shelter of some tiny leaf that had hardly

found light and warmth to grow. But June came on bright and warm, and with it my golden-haired friend; and this is the story she told me.

"Tu, lu, lu, tu, lu, lu," sang the great robin as he hopped this way and that, pretending to pick up worms, but really much more occupied with looking sideways at the shy little maiden who hopped very near him and looked on the ground, as if she thought of nothing in all the world but finding a nice breakfast. Now she lifts her head suddenly, and to her great surprise finds herself quite close to the red-breasted gentleman; so she hops away again, turning every minute to see if he follows.

Pick up the worms, little bird, but listen also to his song; for he sings what is very sweet to hear. "Tu, lu, lu, tu, lu, lu, will you be my bride; will you come with me

to the old lilac tree, where I have found a nice place for a nest; will you, will you, tu, lu, lu, tu, lu, lu?"

Now although the little maiden hopped about shyly and, whenever she found herself near him, took a sudden start to run away as fast as possible, yet she did listen to his song all the while, and after a little sweet converse between them it was all settled; and this was their marriage.



ding took place in the grandest of old cathedrals, with a blue-domed roof and tall graceful pillars with sculptured

capitals; the floor was carpeted with velvet, and light streamed from a magnificent chandelier that gave warmth at the same time. And their bridal song was sung by a choir of hundreds, nay perhaps thousands of the finest singers; but, what was best of all, the bridegroom sang to himself, and the bride seemed only too happy as she stood by his side. They did not go on a wed-ding tour; unless a swift flight up to the great elm-tree top may be called one. There they paused

while the groom pointed out to the bride the old lichengrown lilacs where in the crotch of a branch was still hanging the remains of a last year's nest.

"That is a fine place," she said, "and we must begin to build immediately, if we want to get the eggs laid in good season. Why, my sister's eggs were laid two weeks ago, and we must have our little birds in their autumn coats before the cold comes."

"With all my heart," said he; so, full of



hair, tiny sticks and hay from the open barn window, and they worked gaily from morning till night.

Now, down the street, on this very morning, in the great house with the new piazza, the long curtains are looped back from the windows and sunshine streams in where the rich hothouse flowers crowd deep baskets on the tables. For there is to be a wedding here to-day, and aunts and uncles and cousins are all assembled. The music and the fine dresses make everything bright and gay. Soon the ceremony is over, and in an hour more the guests have greeted the bride, eaten the bride cake, and are gone; while the carriage with white horses has rolled away with bride and bridegroom and the three great trunks filled with rich and gay dresses.

As the guests go down the street they

talk of the fine wedding journey, in which their friends will see London and Paris, and may even go as far as Norway and have their pictures taken by the light of the midnight sun.

While all this is going on, what has become of our robin bride and groom? Look up among the branches of the old lilac. You may see them busily turning and twisting the straws and threads from the yard into a fine little nest. They have even picked up some hairs dropped from the tails of the white horses that carried the bride and groom away on their wedding journey. Doubtless these will add much to the appearance of the nest. Before the week is ended, the nest is finished; and soon, if we could climb so high, we might see in it four beautiful blue eggs. Have n't you heard of robin'segg blue?

Now the mother bird broods over the eggs all the day, while the father flies here and there to the gardens and the fields, to get food for them both.

Now and then he stops on a branch near her to sing of the beautiful things

he has seen, or of the dear little birds that will soon be coming out of the eggs, and the merry life they

Here ended the story of my golden-haired friend, but she left me to find the rest of it myself. I am sure a pair of

will have together.

robins, who made their nest very late, in our own lilacs, must have been the ones of

which she told me, and I watched them all summer as they cared for their babies and sang their morning and evening song, till the autumn winds began to blow cold and they flew away to the

shelter of some pine wood or to the sunny groves of the south.

I can see the poor

deserted nest now as the winter storms have piled it high with snow. I hope

next spring there will be enough of it remaining to suggest to some other robins that my lilacs would be a safe and happy home for themselves and their babies. I shall be sure that they have plenty of pretty threads and strings for building strewed under my trees, for they like a pretty nest as well as we like a pretty house.





WINTER'S

HERALD

In the days of chivalry, mail-clad knights, armed with shield and spear, rode through the land to

defend the right and to punish the wrong.

Whenever they were to meet each other in battle at the great tournaments, a herald was first sent to announce the fight and give fair warning to the opponents, that each might be in all things prepared to meet the other, and defend or attack wisely and upon his guard.

So, dear children, you must know that Winter, who is coming, clad in his icy armor, with his spear, the keen north wind, and his sword, the driving sleet, sends before him a herald, that we may not be all unprepared for his approach.



It is an autumn night when this herald comes; all the warm September noons have slipped away, and the

red October sunsets are almost gone;

still the afternoon light, shining through the two maples, casts a crimson and yellow glow on the white wall of my little room, and on the paths is a delicate carpet of spotted leaves over the brown groundwork.

It is past midnight when the herald is called; and although his knight is so fierce, loud, and blustering, he moves noiselessly forth and carries his warning to all the country round. Through the little birch wood he comes, and whispers a single word to the golden leaves that are hanging so slightly on the slender boughs; one little shiver goes through them, sends them fluttering all to the ground, and the next morning their brown shriveled edges tell a sad story.

Through the birch wood he hurries and on to the bank of the brook that runs through the long valley; for the muskrat, who has his home under the shelving

bank, must hear the news and make haste to arrange his hole with winter comforts before the brook is frozen. While he crosses the meadow the field mouse and the mole hear his warning and lay their heads together to see what is best to be done. Indeed, the mole, who himself can scarcely see at all, is always of opinion that two heads are better than one in such cases.

Beyond the brook is farmer Thompson's field of squashes. "I will not hurt you to-night," says the herald as he creeps among them; "only a little nip here and a bite there, that the farmer may see to-morrow morning that it is time to take you into the barn." The turnips stand only on the other side of the fence and cannot fail to know also that the herald has come.

But up in Lucy's flower garden are the heliotropes and fuchsias, tea roses and geraniums, — delicate sensitive things, who cannot bear a cold word, — it must have been really quite terrible what he said there; for before

sunrise the beautiful plants hung black and withered, and no care from their mistress, no smiles or kind words, could make them look up again. The ivy had borne it bravely, and only showed on his lower leaves, which lay among the grass, a frosty fringe, where the dew used to hang.

My two maples heard the summons and threw off their gay dresses, which withered and faded as they fell in heaps on the sidewalk. The next morning, children going to school scuffed ankle-deep among them and laughed with delight. And the maples bravely answered the herald: "Now let him come, your knight of the north wind and the storm and sleet; we have dropped the gay leaves which he might have torn from us. Let him come; we have nothing

to lose. His snows will only keep our roots the warmer, and his winds cannot blow away the tiny new buds which we cherish, thickly wrapped from the cold, to make new leaves in the spring." And the elm and the linden and horse-chest-nut sent also a like brave answer back by the herald.

Over the whole village green went the whisperer, leaving behind him a white network upon the grass; and before the sun was up to tangle his beams in its meshes and pull it all to pieces, old widow Blake has seen it from her cottage window and said to herself: "Well, winter is coming; I must set up some warm socks for the boys to-day, and begin little Tommy's mittens before the week is out."

And farmer Thompson stands at his great barn door, while yet the eastern sky is red, and tells Jake and Ben that



the squashes and pump-kins and turnips must all be housed in cellar and barn before night; for a frost like this is warning enough to any man

to begin to prepare for winter.

Mr. Winslow, the gardener, is working all day with matting and straw, tying up and packing warmly his tender shrubs and trees; and the climbing rose that is trained against the west end of the piazza must be made safe from the cold winds that will soon be creeping round there.

What will your mother do when she sees the white message that the herald has left in his frosty writing all over the lawn? Will she put away the muslin frocks and little pink or blue calicoes and ginghams, the straw hats, and Frank's white trousers and summer jackets, just as the

Not quite like the trees; for your clothes can't be made new every spring out of little brown buds, but must be put away in the great drawers and trunks of the clothespress, to wait for you through the winter.

trees threw aside their summer

leaves?

And see how your mother will bring out the woolen stockings, warm hoods and caps, mittens, cloaks, and plaided dresses; and try on and make over, that all things may be ready. For it is with such things as these that she arms her little boys and girls to meet the knight who is coming with north wind and storm.

Irish Bridget, who lives in the little brown house down at the corner, although she cannot read a word from a book, reads the herald's message as well as your mother can. But here are her five boys, barefooted and ragged, ever in summer clothes, and her husband lies sick with a fever.

She can't send back so brave an answer as your mother does. But your mother, and cousin George's mother, and Uncle James can help her to make a good, brave answer; for here is Frank's last winter jacket, quite too small for him, just right for little Jim; and father's old

overcoat will make warm little ones for two of the other boys. And here are

stout new shoes and woolensocks, and comfortable bedclothes for the sick man. Bridget does send a brave



answer now, although this morning she was half ready to cry when she saw the message that the winter had sent.

Look about you, children, when the herald comes, and see what answers the people are giving him; I have told you a few. You can tell me many, if you will, before another year goes by.



WHAT THE WINTER STARS SAW





THE old, white-bearded man came in just at dusk last night; all the sunset glow had faded away, and in the quiet sky one star after

another had come out. Over the hill which lies to the eastward I could just



begin to see Orion. Do you know Orion, who marches across the sky every night with his starry belt and shield and sword? Ask your father to show him to you some night just before you go to bed; and once seeing, I think you will not fail to remember and know him again.

Higher up are the Pleiades, seven starry sisters, whom you would soon learn to know,—six of them at least,—and we can always imagine the seventh, who is said to be lost,

as still hiding somewhere among the others.

Now that I have begun, I quite long to tell you about the stars themselves, but that was not what my old friend told me last night; and I am to give you his stories, not my own; so we will wait for another time to hear of the stars.

"They look down upon us like so many bright eyes," said he as we turned to go into the house. "Do you know what they would see to-night if they were eyes?"

I knew now that he had something to tell; for he knows what none of us can know, and I sometimes fancy that he must have traveled over all lands, in his younger days at least, if not lately.

"They would see a great way," he said musingly, "as far, I should think, as the great Siberian plains, where hunters are out on the snow, chasing with dogs the swift-footed ermine (but for his black-tipped tail it would be hard to see him on the snow), and digging traps for the graceful dark-furred sable. He, poor fellow, be-

cause he wears so beautiful a fur coat, must be killed and give up his skin for muffs and capes.

"They can see the fishermen, too, on the Norway coast, gliding out of their rocky bays, with waving lights to lure the fish and ice-sheathed lines to catch them, so cold are these winter nights in the north.

"And they see the silver fox, howling to the moon, as he struggles in the snare which the Labrador Esquimaux laid so cunningly for him; and the martens and minks out on the snow; and seals, which the hunt- ers are seek-

ing, with blazing torches and heavy clubs. "Pleasanter sights than these, however,

the stars may see. At early morning, long before sunrise, they may see the Dutch women buckle on their skates and, with pails and baskets on their heads, with little, jaunty, close-fitting jackets, and short, clean skirts, skate down the frozen canal, - which you know is their street, on the way to market.

"Mountain cottagers are out to milk their cows by starlight, and to look at the growth of the great glacier, that icy river that lies on the mountain side, growing with every winter's snow, and gliding, so slowly, every summer a little farther towards the valley. Some day there may come a terrible slide of this ice stream; and when it comes the stars, too, will see that. Take care, mountain cottager, that you, and the hut which holds your wife and babies, be not in its path.



light shimmers on the frozen pillars and turrets where waterfalls have left their summer work, at the bidding of the north wind, and given all their strength and skill to build new palaces and temples, changing every day in grace and beauty.



"In thick woods, where the ground is



still bare, and whirling snowstorms cannot penetrate; in the dark shelter of great tree roots, thrust out of the earth like giant limbs, struggling for a foothold; the beautiful rose-colored cups of fungi still brave the cold. And on decaying stumps, delicate mushrooms, like butterflies' wings, cluster and flourish in all their exquisite life, as if frost never



"But it is n't often the stars can peep so deep into the forests; they rather rejoice and smile upon great, tossing pines, and hemlocks singing for joy in the night wind, sheltering the crow and the jay among their branches through the whole year, when other birds have flown to warmer lands. And sometimes, through the forests, they catch glimpses of the railroad night trains, rushing along with panting, fiery breath, and red glow cast on the snowy path. They are so full of strength and life that we can scarcely imagine the sleepy passengers, who are falling against each other at every jolt in the track and rousing themselves at last to look out for the morning star,—the only star in fact that many of them wish to see.

"As swift as the night express train, but not as noisy, is this flock of snow-birds, so timid that they dare not fly in the daytime, hurrying night after night on their southward journey. For the snowbirds, whose summer home is in countries colder than this, are quite satisfied with our winters and find comfortable lodgings in many a haystack.

"Oh, the stars see many things which are hidden from the great, bright eye of the sun;
many sad
things
and much
that is
beautiful.
They see
great ships,
ice-bound in
northern seas, full of
men who long and pray for
the sun, which they have not
seen for weeks; travelers toil-

ing in snow and darkness over unknown roads; homeless children in great cities seeking shelter in gateways and on doorsteps, and falling asleep on the hard stones. Through chamber windows, too, they look on little white-covered cribs where children sleep, kissed and tucked up by loving mothers; but the cold child

on the pavement is as dear to the stars as is the warm one in the crib."

Here the old man stopped. What was he thinking of, that he sat, musing on, by the fire, speaking not a word? Did he remember any young children who had watched the winter stars with him?

The fire burned low. It was the last night of the old year; a night when children can hardly keep asleep for thinking of the presents that are to come with the morning, and a night when we who are older have much to remember and think about.



¹ It was the custom in the old times in New England to give presents on New Year's morning instead of Christmas.

"It is almost twelve o'clock," said he, lifting his chin from the staff where it had been resting; "shall I tell you a New Year's story?

"Do you hear what a noise the wind is making with the tree boughs and window blinds on the north side of the house? I can tell you something about that wind."

Turn over the page, dear children, and you may read the story of —





SOME FROST FLOWERS; THE NORTH WIND'S BIRTH-GIFT TO THE EARTH'S YOUNGEST CHILD

CHAPTER I

THE NORTH WIND
RECEIVES A
TELEGRAM

North Wind was merry on this December day. He went whistling about his ice palace, singing his hoarse, wild chants and waking up the ptarmigan and snowy gulls, till they screamed a chorus to his song.

He was very busy at home that day, and yet, when all at once, through the

darkness, a message came to him on the northern light, he was, in half a minute, just as busily preparing for a long journey.

You must know that the northern light



is the telegraph of the air, and the winds and other air spirits will not condescend to receive messages on any other; although, indeed, you may often hear them making a great stir among our own telegraph wires.

Listen when you walk under them on a windy day.

But what were the preparations that the North Wind made for his journey?

He first locked the door of his great ice palace; locked : without lock or key; bolted it without bolt or bar; and left it very secure, indeed, from any intrusion of bear or fox, Esquimaux or wild birds; secure from everything and everybody but his one strong enemy, South Wind. He was sure to come in the train of the great sun king, in three or four months, and perhaps would bring his brother from the west to help him. He would open the doors with his golden key, slide in over the beautiful glassy floors, and once in at the front door and out at the back. would leave nothing but destruction behind him. So at least thought the North Wind; therefore the next thing he did,



after locking his palace, was to call up his soldiers. Quickly they clustered round him with their cold, bris-

tling spears; and while he marshaled them in long files about the palace gate, they all solemnly promised that they would sooner lay down their icy lives in pools of water than admit the South Wind, either at the front door or the back.

After this he felt tolerably secure; although he cannot but remember that he has never returned after a few months' absence without finding that some damage has been done by his enemy. It is true that his servants had often also been busy in attempting to repair the injuries, and had built fair arches and lovely columns,



Now he has taken one last look about him, swept one last strain of stormy music among the ice peaks, and whirled away on his journey, — far away over land and sea.

What was the message which moved the North Wind to take this journey?

It was flashed out in gold and crimson; but so quickly that the very elves

of the north, who themselves dance in the streamers, could not read it. So while the last storm-peal is echoing among the cliffs, already the elms have asked the gulls if they know what was the message; and the gulls have screamed and wheeled away; for

they don't know, and so pretend not to hear. And the

> Esquimaux have asked the North Star, who stands so high and calm that he might well see all

things below him; and the fox and the bear have each asked their comrades; yet no one has any answer; for the beautiful, flashing lights know how to keep the secret. And so the North Wind has gone—no one knows whither; and if we would discover, we must follow him on his journey.

CHAPTER II

WE FOLLOW THE NORTH WIND ON HIS JOURNEY

Over the broad ice plains; over the frozen ocean and the snow-covered land, we follow the Wind. What he does upon the road it remains for me yet to tell; but he must attend now to the purpose for which his message calls him.

Hundreds of miles he has come through the clear, dark air, below the steady stars; hundreds of miles in the dancing sunlight and the blue sky. And now he gathers a soft white cloud, that swims along before him, and with one breath blows it into a million fairy star flowers, with white, fringed petals, and showers them down upon a little group of cloaked and hooded children, hurrying from school over the bleak road to the village. Down they come on the little red hoods and the blue and brown and plaided cloaks; down they come, crowning the little brows and wreathing the very eyelashes. See how the children catch them in their warm hands, — the tiny, delicate flowers, so frail that their fringed petals tremble and they fairly faint away from the oppressive heat; for they were born of the North Wind and can live only in his cold, clear atmosphere.

As we sweep over the great Russian plains, there is a company of mounted dragoons galloping heavily over the frozen ground; bearded men they

are, with cold, hard weapons and stiff caps and uniforms. Is therenothing graceful or gentle about them? "Let me dress them up a bit," says the North Wind. So he tosses the young lieutenant's brown curls into his eyes, and just while he brushes them back again, down come a few scattering white blossoms, round and firm as the fruit of the snowberry bush, and lodge among the curls and nestle into them like tiny eggs in a nest. Here they come, faster and faster. The Wind



works quickly. Give him but a troop of fleecy clouds, and he will send you a shower of frost flowers in a trice, varied and beautiful as the finest greenhouse can afford; so now they are star-shaped and now little feathery spears, which dare even to adorn the gray moustache of the old colonel himself, who rides so stately at the head of the company.

But now while the dragoons gather their cloaks about them, and brush away the white wreaths with which the Wind has dressed them, he is by no means stopping to watch their proceedings, but has hurried away among gray clouds; and by chance he reaches a poet's window,



open, he thinks it well to put the æolian harp there; so our great friend from the north sweeps in across the strings and sounds one of his grand ice marches, and the poet hears it in a dream and cannot remember, the next morning, what his dream was like, only he is very sure that there was something in it about the lovely tree ferns and palms that are laid in silvery frostwork all over his north window.

"How did the cold North Wind learn to paint these wondrous leaves that grow only in the tropics?" mused the poet. But he could not answer his own question, and his yellow-locked little Gretchen, who climbed into his arms and laid her finger among the silver ferns and palms, could not answer it either.

But on the ponds that day, as the sun is setting, Ned shouts to Charley, "It's

growing colder; do you hear the ice crack?" And while the echo from the hill is shouting "crack," a great boom,



like that of a cannon, sounds across the pond; and that boom is the shout of the North Wind. Perhaps it announces his arrival to keep the appointment for which he was telegraphed.



is lost out at sea, and the Wind is left alone to swing the boughs and make them strike out a music of silver cymbals, as the young moon creeps out from the hurrying clouds and looks down among them.

The world seems hushed and waiting; for this is the birth-night of another child

to the dear old Mother Earth, and for this has the North Wind been strewing his flower gifts through the halls of the grand old castle whose roof is the sky.

It is almost midnight. The moon can wait quietly, but the Wind must sweep and whistle about

into all sorts of corners and crevices; and so it is that he finds a low, dark house where there are plenty of holes for him to enter. He comes to the little garret in the roof, and there he weaves a curtain of fine lace over the broken window, where the moonlight, shining through, casts a shadow like a delicate veil upon the white face of a child who has left her body, like a little white dress, behind her in the cold, poor room, and gone away among the angels. And while he is thus busy, stirring the soft hair and, with all his cold roughness, yet touching tenderly the body of the little girl who has gone, lo! the clock has struck twelve, and with a great peal the bells, waking suddenly in the old church tower, clamor and shout to each other that the New Year is born; the New Year, — a strong, bright boy, not



afraid of the cold or the storm, just as adventurous and hopeful as all his brothers were before him; for old Time, his father, and his mother, the Earth, have had many children,—too many to count, perhaps. And each has lived but a single twelvementh, and, passing away, has given place to another, young, fresh,

and strong, ready to carry us all on his stout shoulders, even in his babyhood. For these sons of Time are like the giants of old, and nursed by great winds, cradled under the sky alone, they begin life with a leap of healthy, happy vigor, and give never a thought to the shortness of the year they are to stay.

So this child, this New Year, hears the children crying, "A happy New Year!" and sees the old people shake hands and give each other good wishes; and smiles on the presents which Nannie and Charley and May are rejoicing over; every one has something to be happy with this New Year.

The North Wind has brought the white birth-flowers, and now must be going to look after his ice palace again; while the world moves on and may soon forget his frost wreaths, his palm trees

and ferns, and even the cold, little child in the garret, whose New Year's gift was her new life among the angels.









eggs, and young animals being born into life with the new, sweet warmth and light.

And all through the summer young birds were learning to fly; flowers blooming and ripening their seed; the Indian corn was swelling, and the wheat ears were growing fuller every day, till the whole wheat field bent heavily in waves like the sea. Tadpoles grew into young frogs and toads; insects found their wings, lilies their white blossoms; everything was awake and full of life.

But when autumn came, after the harvesting was over, everything became quieter. Summer birds flew away, taking their spring-born babies with them; flowers withered and died; trees scattered their leaves on the ground, and there was a hush over all. This was because the time had come for the earth lullaby to be sung; and all this quiet was to prepare for the winter's sleep.

In northern countries, where eider

ducks build nests among the rocks, the Norwegians and Icelanders may sleep under quilts of eiderdown; but a kindly mother now spreads a quilt, even softer and whiter, over the bed where her chil-

dren sleep.

The trees stand as nobly and gracefully against the sky as ever, but they are asleep, down to the very roots; the fine grasping roots that, in the spring, reached after food like open mouths, and sent up sap, streaming and coursing through all the trees. They are as quiet in their dark bed as if there was no further work to do in the world. The brown earth wraps them about; but they

might, for all that, freeze were it not for the down quilt of the snow laid above them

Now come with me and I will show you some of the bedrooms where little animals are taking their winter naps.

If we know where to dig, we may push away the snow from many a little hole, which you will hardly suspect is the doorway to an earthy house called a burrow. Long front entries, or halls, the burrows have; some of them winding, and so artfully made that we should scarcely find our way through them to the room beyond. And in such earthy houses the newts and tritons lie, twisted and twined together by head and tail, nestling closely for warmth; for they are lizard-like little creatures, loving the sunshine, and must consequently sleep warmly through the winter, which is their night.



his burrow, with a little store of food by his side, that he may wake and nibble when he chooses — though he does n't often choose.

And not far away the frogs, cousins to the newts, have gone to bed in the same manner; only they have chosen the mud at the bottom of a marsh or pond, instead of a dry earthy chamber.

And now if you will come with me to explore the rocky cave with a hundred dark holes and crevices that furnish winter lodgings to an odd family of lodgers, we can inspect them all at our leisure, for they will not be wakened by our visit.



Far in the remotest and warmest apartments hang the bats, head downward, so dead with sleep that they appear to be hung up by their clothes to dry, and we wonder if they

will ever wake again. They are cuddled close together for warmth, and for months they neither stir nor eat. No wonder that they are awake and active when the summer nights return.

But now come up from below, and if we could creep among the crevices that you see in piles of rocks and stones, here and there all over the hill, we should find the coiled snakes also asleep in little corners and nooks where the snow can never penetrate; though it will cover over the door of entrance and keep out the piercing wind. Here they sleep, the little green grass snake, the striped adder, and the great black snake, through a long night, without a morsel of food; and when they wake in the spring their first work will be to throw off their skins, like so many nightgowns, and adorn themselves in bright new day dresses. You may find the old skins left lying among the rocks, if you look when you go out for hepaticas and houstonias.

Nor must we forget the crabs, who once a year get a new dress and go into the deepest retirement while making it. At Christmas time perhaps the festive season suggests to them the propriety of new apparel, for then it is that their old shells are cast off and they creep away among the rocks and hide themselves for a month or two and let their new garments grow. These are finished at Easter, and the crab is in the height of fashion.



In the thick woods the black bear has dug a sort of nest in the shelter of a fallen tree and,

creeping in at the beginning of some great snowstorm, has been covered deep and warm for the winter. Poor fellow! he went to sleep as round and fat as he could wish to be, but a three months' nap, with nothing to eat, brings him out in the spring so lean and hungry that you would hardly know him for the same bear. Under the logs and the snow he lay dreaming of the hum of wild bees and the hives of honey in hollow trees; for bears are good climbers, and, where honey may be had, are willing to climb high for it. The mother bear, however, dreams, I guess, of something besides honey; for it is during this sleepy nighttime that her cubs are born, and she has to wake by and by to get food for them.

Then we must not forget her cousin, the white bear, who made his winter bed of ice and snow and may wake to find himself drifting away on an iceberg from Labrador to Iceland.

In the hollow trees that grow round the borders of swamps we may find, if



we look, an old raccoon, rolled up with his head between his legs, fast asleep. Only once in a great while he rouses himself to creep sleepily out for a meal of what food he can find; but food is scarce, for the oysters are under the ice, corn is in the granaries, and summer birds have flown.

And where are the flies, the grasshoppers, and the butterflies and all the gay creatures that made summer bright and noisy? Many of them were made only to live a summer life, and died when the autumn days came. But they left behind them in some safe little nest the eggs that should hatch in the coming spring and people the world with their race. Those who live through the winter, as some of the burrowing beetles do, have halls and palaces underground, or snug, sheltered holes and corners, where they await the

return of summer in a drowsy kind of sleep.

These are some of the winter sleepers. But I have wondered to find how, in all this stillness that rests upon the

earth, there are also many wakers as well: field mice and moles; muskrats down by the brooks; cedar birds and robins even, who dared to stay when their brothers went, driven before the cold winds; flocks of snowbirds; plenty of crows and quails, safe among thickets where the snow cannot bury them.

Yet, after all, winter is the time for the earth's sleep. We could not expect her to keep awake and at work always. Sleep brings strength. The trees must rest in order to grow; the little meadow plants and grasses must have a quiet time wherein to prepare for spring, and then, when March winds begin to wake them, all will be fresh and ready as a child awaking from its sleep.





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